

BLUES SLUMP TO LOW EBB IN 3-0 DEFEAT

By **STUART EARP** Wycombe W. O, Rest of League XI 3

LAST YEAR, the annual match between the champions and the Rest of the League XI produced seven goals and some delightful attacking football. On Tuesday night we saw just the opposite. Wycombe Wanderers were beaten 3-0 after one of their poorest performances at Loakes Park for some time.

It is easy to say there was nothing at stake in this representative game but 885 spectators paid good money to be entertained for 90 minutes and they just didn't get it. In the second half particularly, the game slumped to a really low ebb and for once I have to report, there was a distinct lack of effort from the home side.

True, they were up against about the best XI players in the league but that is no excuse for the number of errors that ac-

cumulated. With more dedication, those mistakes could easily have been avoided.

The game itself lacked atmosphere with the crowd strangely quiet throughout. There was not even a ripple of applause for any of the three goals scored by the Rest and overall, the fans had very little to enthuse about.

There were four former Wanderers in the Rest XI and one of them, Keith Searle found the target as early as the fourth minute, emphasising just what Wycombe are missing this season. The goal was simply executed with John Butterfield's cross being headed on by John Baker. Searle stroked the ball past Dave Bullock with the minimum amount of fuss.

With Searle, Butterfield and Baker making up a potent forward line and Larry Pritchard and Chris Kelly in midfield,

Wycombe had their work cut out to keep the scoring down. Their defence can take great credit for their performance and every one of the back four did their best, with Ray Eaton and Paul Birdseye both having fine games. Terry Reardon did the work of two men in midfield but Mick Hollifield could hardly put a foot right all night.

Once again, the main weakness was up front. Against an efficient league defence, Wycombe rarely looked like causing problems and with distribution poor from midfield, Peter Deadman and Alan Phillips simply thrived on anything that came their way.

Tony Horseman forced a good stop from Ilford's Terry Moore after 25 minutes but even though the Rest XI had obvious difficulties in playing as a team, they still looked more likely to score. Before half time the

crowd voiced their disapproval at the number of back passes to Bullock in goal but one felt for the offending players, who had little moving for them upfield.

One of the few bright spots for Wanderers on a gloomy night was the return of Tony Price. Nobby Skinner, the Leatherhead forward did not appear, but Price came on for Geoff Anthony after 31 minutes and showed one or two touches of real class.

Ricky Kidd of Sutton replaced Pritchard for the second half and was soon causing all sorts of trouble. Twice he broke through but fired wide and then Searle was only just off target after a similar break.

The second goal was a rather unfortunate affair as far as Wycombe were concerned. Kelly, who showed his abundant talent and yet infuriatingly hung on to the ball too long, fired in a

shot which struck a defender and bounced into the net with Bullock covering the original path of the ball.

Twelve minutes later a third goal was added by Johnny Baker who drilled home a 10 yard shot after a scramble inside the penalty area.

One of Wycombe's few chances came after 77 minutes when Horseman sprinted onto Reardon's first time through ball. As Dave Sargeant tried to find Moore, 'Bodger' ripped in between them and stabbed the ball towards the net until Phillips raced across to clear.

But after that moment of excitement, the game deteriorated still further and even though Dylan Evans missed a chance in the last minute, it scarcely seemed to matter. I think everyone was glad to hear that final whistle.

WYCOMBE: D. Bullock; P. Birdseye, K. Mead (sub. D. Harris 76 mins.), J. Delaney, R. Eaton; D. Alexander (sub. H. Kennedy 45 mins.), T. Reardon, M. Hollifield; A. Horseman, D. Evans, G. Anthony (sub. A. Price 31 mins.) Sub. D. Cotterell (not used).

REST XI: T. Moore (Ilford); D. Sargeant (Leatherhead), P. Deadman (Ilford), A. Phillips (Hendon), G. Hand (Hendon); C. Kelly (Leatherhead), L. Pritchard (Sutton) — sub. R. Kidd (Sutton 45 mins.), D. Baker (Enfield); J. Butterfield (Ilford) — sub. A. Devonshire (Southall 45 mins.), K. Searle (Enfield), J. Baker (Hendon). Sub. J. Swannell (Leatherhead not used).

Referee: K. Underwood (Essex).
Half time: 0-1. **Goalscorers:** — Rest: Searle (4), Kelly (63), J. Baker (76).

Official attendance: 885.